

ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND TÜRKİYE: PROMISING AREAS FOR COLLABORATION

Bülbul ABDULLAYEVA

Karabük Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi. İktisad bölümü. Doktora öğrencisi.
E-mail: bulbulabdullayeva@gmail.com, Orcid: 0009-0008-7242-3287

Doç. Dr. Ali KONAK

Karabük Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi, İktisat Bölümü, Karabük /Türkiye
E-mail: alikonak@karabuk.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0003-1804-8339
Toshkent Amaliy Fanlar Universiteti Tarmoqlar İqtisodiyoti va Buxgalteriyasi Bo'limi,
Taşkent/Uzbekistan
E-mail: alikonak@utas.uz

Mehmet Akif PEÇE

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Bartın University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences,
Department of Economics,
E-mail: apece@bartin.edu.tr, Orcid: 0000-0002-2870-50081

Mexmonaliyev Doniyorjon Zohidjon o'g'li

Tashkent University of Applied Sciences, Student of Economics (by sectors and areas)
E-mail: doniormehmonaliyev@mail.ru, Orcid:0009-0000-1469-390X

Abstract

Uzbekistan, located in the heart of Central Asia, is one of the region's most promising economies, demonstrating sustained economic progress and significant development potential. Türkiye and this strategically important Central Asian country have maintained long-standing, multifaceted relations founded on historical ties and mutual friendship. In recent years, the close cultural affinity and enduring bilateral relations between Uzbekistan and Türkiye have increasingly been reflected in the economic sphere. In particular, trade relations between the two countries have expanded rapidly. As of the end of 2024, the bilateral trade volume between Türkiye and Uzbekistan reached approximately USD 3 billion and continues to grow toward the USD 5 billion target established under the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed by the two countries. Türkiye consistently records a trade surplus in its bilateral trade with Uzbekistan and ranks as Uzbekistan's fourth-largest trading partner and export destination. Türkiye's exports to Uzbekistan primarily consist of value-added manufactured products, machinery, and industrial equipment. Major export items include electrical machinery and equipment, plastics and plastic products, articles of iron or steel, furniture, and ready-made garments. In contrast, Türkiye imports predominantly raw materials and semi-finished products from Uzbekistan, including copper and copper products, cotton, chemicals, and mineral ores. The steady expansion of bilateral trade over the years represents a highly encouraging development. Nevertheless, considering the substantial economic potential of both countries, the current level of trade remains well below its attainable capacity. Accordingly, further legal and institutional reforms, together with the conclusion of additional bilateral trade agreements, are essential for enabling both countries to utilize their economic potential more effectively, thereby contributing to their long-term economic development. This study aims to examine the evolution of trade relations between Uzbekistan and Türkiye over time and to raise awareness of the considerable untapped potential for expanding bilateral economic cooperation.

Keywords: Economic Cooperation; Uzbekistan; Sectoral Development.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary global economy, international economic cooperation has become an essential factor in achieving sustainable development, enhancing competitiveness, and promoting regional integration. Countries increasingly seek strategic partnerships that facilitate trade expansion, investment inflows, technological exchange, and economic modernization. Within this context, the economic relationship between Uzbekistan and Türkiye has emerged as one of the most dynamic and promising examples of bilateral cooperation in the Eurasian region.

Uzbekistan and Türkiye share deep historical, cultural, linguistic, and civilizational ties that date back many centuries. These common roots have created a strong foundation for political dialogue and economic collaboration. Since Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, Türkiye has consistently supported the country's integration into the global economy and has remained one of its important political and economic partners. Over the years, bilateral relations have evolved from traditional diplomatic cooperation into a multifaceted strategic partnership encompassing trade, investment, industry, tourism, education, transportation, and infrastructure development.

The recent economic reforms implemented in Uzbekistan have significantly contributed to strengthening economic relations with foreign partners, including Türkiye. Since 2017, Uzbekistan has undertaken comprehensive reforms aimed at liberalizing the economy, improving the business environment, attracting foreign direct investment, and expanding international trade. These reforms have increased the country's attractiveness to foreign investors and created new opportunities for economic cooperation. As a result, Turkish companies have expanded their presence in the Uzbek market through investments in manufacturing, construction, textile production, agriculture, and service industries.

Türkiye occupies a strategically important position in Uzbekistan's foreign economic policy. As one of the largest economies in the region, Türkiye serves as a bridge between Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. Its advanced industrial base, developed infrastructure, and extensive international trade networks make it an attractive partner for Uzbekistan's economic modernization efforts. At the same time, Uzbekistan represents an important market and investment destination for Turkish businesses seeking to strengthen their presence in Central Asia.

Trade relations constitute one of the key pillars of economic cooperation between the two countries. Bilateral trade turnover has demonstrated consistent growth in recent years, reflecting increasing economic interdependence and expanding commercial ties. Various agreements signed between the governments have facilitated trade liberalization, reduced barriers to business activities, and encouraged private-sector cooperation. The expansion of exports and imports has contributed to greater market diversification and enhanced economic connectivity between the two nations.

Investment cooperation has also become a significant component of bilateral economic relations. Turkish investors have actively participated in Uzbekistan's economic transformation by establishing joint ventures, introducing modern technologies, and creating employment opportunities. The growing number of enterprises with Turkish capital reflects increasing investor confidence in Uzbekistan's economic potential. In turn, Uzbekistan has benefited from the transfer of managerial expertise, technological knowledge, and industrial experience provided by Turkish partners.

Another important dimension of cooperation is industrial development. Both countries have recognized the importance of strengthening industrial partnerships to increase value-added

production and improve competitiveness. Cooperation in textile manufacturing, construction materials, food processing, automotive components, and machinery production has created favorable conditions for industrial diversification. Joint industrial projects contribute not only to economic growth but also to the development of human capital and technological capabilities.

Transport and logistics cooperation has gained particular significance in recent years due to changing global trade patterns and increasing interest in regional connectivity initiatives. As a landlocked country, Uzbekistan places considerable emphasis on improving access to international markets through efficient transportation corridors. Türkiye's geographical position and developed transport infrastructure offer valuable opportunities for enhancing regional trade routes linking Central Asia with Europe and the Mediterranean region. Consequently, transport and logistics cooperation has become an important area for future economic integration.

Tourism represents another promising sphere of bilateral cooperation. Both Uzbekistan and Türkiye possess rich historical, cultural, and architectural heritage that attracts millions of visitors annually. Increased air connectivity, simplified travel procedures, and growing cultural exchanges have stimulated tourism flows between the two countries. The tourism sector not only contributes to economic growth but also strengthens people-to-people relations and cultural understanding.

In addition to traditional sectors, new areas of cooperation have emerged in response to global economic transformations. Digitalization, innovation, renewable energy, green technologies, and the development of smart industries have become increasingly important components of economic policy in both countries. The growing emphasis on sustainable development creates opportunities for joint initiatives aimed at addressing environmental challenges while promoting economic growth.

Despite substantial progress, several challenges continue to influence the development of bilateral economic relations. Global economic uncertainty, geopolitical risks, transportation costs, regulatory differences, and external market fluctuations may affect the pace of cooperation. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policy measures, institutional reforms, and stronger collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders.

Given the strategic importance of Uzbekistan–Türkiye economic relations, a comprehensive analysis of current trends and future prospects is both timely and relevant. Understanding the factors that drive bilateral cooperation can contribute to the formulation of effective economic policies and support long-term sustainable development objectives.

The purpose of this article is to examine the current state of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Türkiye, analyze major trends in trade and investment relations, identify key sectors of collaboration, and evaluate future opportunities for strengthening bilateral economic partnerships. Furthermore, the study aims to highlight existing challenges and propose directions for enhancing economic cooperation in the context of regional and global economic transformations.

2. Current State of Economic Cooperation Between Uzbekistan and Türkiye

Türkiye and Uzbekistan share long-standing historical, cultural, and linguistic ties that have served as a solid foundation for their bilateral relations. Notably, Türkiye was the first country to recognize Uzbekistan's independence. Owing to these unique historical and cultural links, both countries attach considerable importance to strengthening their bilateral cooperation. With its rich cultural heritage, abundant natural resources, and growing economic capacity, Uzbekistan has emerged as one of Türkiye's most important strategic partners in Central Asia. Despite this strong foundation, economic relations between the two countries remained below their potential during the period from Uzbekistan's independence until 2016. However, following the election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as

President in 2016, bilateral relations entered a new phase characterized by closer political and economic cooperation. This rapprochement led to substantial increases in both bilateral trade and mutual foreign direct investment. Between 2016 and 2019, bilateral trade more than doubled, reaching USD 2.2 billion. Although trade contracted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Türkiye's investment presence in Uzbekistan remained significant. By 2020, Turkish investments in Uzbekistan had exceeded USD 1 billion, and more than 1,300 Turkish companies were operating in the country. In contrast, Uzbekistan's investment in Türkiye has remained comparatively limited, with fewer than 300 Uzbek companies conducting business operations in Türkiye. Since 2017, bilateral relations have increasingly evolved into a comprehensive strategic partnership. Over time, this strengthened cooperation has contributed to expanding government-to-government collaboration while promoting the development of trade, investment, and infrastructure projects. Between 1993 and 2020, Turkish companies completed infrastructure projects across Uzbekistan with a cumulative value exceeding USD 3 billion (İstikbal, 2021: 12–13). In subsequent years, investment activities between the two countries have continued to expand, reflecting the steadily deepening economic partnership.

Uzbekistan's imports from Türkiye (2024)	
	(A.B.D. Doları)
All products	1,677,392
Nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; parts thereof	604453
Electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; sound recorders and reproducers, television ...	123461
Plastics and articles thereof	100513
Articles of iron or steel	59509
Miscellaneous chemical products	58836
Uzbekistan's exports to Türkiye (2024)	
(A.B.D. Doları)	
All products	982,117
Copper and articles thereof	332826
Cotton	325064
Plastics and articles thereof	87331
Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous substances; mineral ...	34757
Zinc and articles thereof	33468

As of 2024, the latest year for which comprehensive data are available, the bilateral trade volume between Uzbekistan and Türkiye amounted to approximately USD 2.659 billion. Uzbekistan's imports from Türkiye consist primarily of nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances and their parts; electrical machinery and equipment and their components; sound recording and reproduction devices, television equipment; plastics and articles thereof; articles of iron or steel; and various chemical products. Conversely, Uzbekistan's exports to Türkiye are dominated by copper and articles of copper, cotton products, plastics and articles thereof, mineral fuels, mineral oils, zinc, and articles of zinc. Türkiye is Uzbekistan's third-largest export market and fifth-largest source of imports. From Türkiye's perspective, however, Uzbekistan has yet to attain the desired level of importance in its overall foreign trade. Consequently, the two countries have established an ambitious target of increasing bilateral trade to USD 10 billion. Achieving this objective is expected to further strengthen bilateral economic relations. Given the extensive experience of Turkish companies in implementing major infrastructure projects worldwide, greater emphasis could be placed on expanding their activities in Uzbekistan. As bilateral cooperation

continues to deepen, increased participation by Turkish firms in infrastructure development projects across Uzbekistan is expected to generate substantial mutual economic benefits. In this context, Türkiye could contribute its technological expertise to the modernization of Uzbekistan's road infrastructure, railway networks, and power generation facilities. An examination of bilateral trade patterns also indicates that trade volumes have not yet fully recovered to their potential following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (İstikbal, 2021: 13). In 2025, Türkiye's exports to Uzbekistan reached approximately USD 2 billion. The principal export products included petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals; worked monumental or building stone (excluding slate), mosaic cubes, and stone granules; prepared iron or steel plates, bars, and other construction materials; centrifuges and machinery and apparatus for filtering or purifying liquids or gases; and electrical control panels, distribution boards, consoles, cabinets, other bases, and numerical control devices. During the same year, Türkiye's imports from Uzbekistan amounted to approximately USD 1 billion. The principal imported products included copper wire; cotton yarn (excluding sewing thread) containing at least 85% cotton by weight and not put up for retail sale; iron ores and concentrates; polymers of ethylene in primary forms; and copper tubes and pipes. As a result of these trade flows, Türkiye recorded a USD 1 billion trade surplus in its trade with Uzbekistan in 2025 (Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye, 2026: 13). In the coming years, Uzbekistan's foreign trade structure is likely to evolve in line with its export-oriented growth strategy. The country ranks among the world's leading producers of commodities such as cotton, gold, and uranium, all of which constitute a substantial share of its total exports and remain strategically important to the national economy. On the import side, the predominance of manufactured goods indicates that the country's industrial production capacity has not yet reached the desired level. Unlike Türkiye, which liberalized its foreign trade decades ago, Uzbekistan maintained a relatively protected trade regime for many years, making it a largely untapped market for Turkish investors. Given its significance as a supplier of products imported by Türkiye, Uzbekistan represents an important economic partner with considerable untapped potential. Accordingly, bilateral trade should expand beyond a limited number of sectors, enabling both countries to benefit more equitably from their economic cooperation (İstikbal, 2021: 13–14).

Turkish companies have undertaken major investment projects in Uzbekistan, particularly in the construction, energy, agriculture, and services sectors. Since the 1990s, investments in housing developments, shopping centers, and infrastructure projects have reflected the growing economic engagement between the two countries. In the energy sector, Turkish firms have played a particularly active role in projects aimed at modernizing Uzbekistan's energy infrastructure. At the same time, Uzbek investors have expanded their presence in Türkiye through investments in the tourism, real estate, and agricultural sectors.

Energy cooperation constitutes one of the strategic pillars of Türkiye–Uzbekistan relations. Uzbekistan's abundant natural gas and mineral resources occupy an important position in Türkiye's energy supply strategy, prompting the two countries to conclude a range of bilateral energy agreements. In particular, the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in 1996 and the Strategic Partnership Agreement concluded in 2017 represent the principal institutional frameworks underpinning the development and deepening of bilateral economic relations (Sezer, 2025: 1303).

2. Trade and Investment Relations

Owing to its strategic location and abundant natural resources, Central Asia has consistently occupied a prominent position in global geopolitics. For centuries, the region has served as a focal point of international power competition. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asia re-emerged as a strategic hub for global political, economic, and transportation initiatives. In this context, the region has preserved its historical significance while continuing to shape the foreign policy priorities of a wide range of international actors (Hamzaoglu, 2022: 315). Economic

relations between Türkiye and Uzbekistan have strengthened considerably in recent years through bilateral agreements, intergovernmental cooperation mechanisms, and regular high-level diplomatic engagement. In particular, the official visit of the President of Türkiye to Uzbekistan in 2023, followed by the official visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Türkiye in 2024, resulted in the signing of numerous agreements and investment-oriented cooperation protocols that have significantly deepened the economic partnership between the two countries. Furthermore, the Preferential Trade Agreement currently in force, together with the reciprocal granting of Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) status, has contributed substantially to the expansion of bilateral trade (Taşkent Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2026). Having declared its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan experienced periods of both cooperation and tension in its relations with Türkiye. Türkiye was the first country to recognize Uzbekistan's independence, and in 1996 the two countries signed the Treaty of Perpetual Friendship and Cooperation. Nevertheless, during the prolonged presidency of Islam Karimov, Turkish–Uzbek relations did not always progress smoothly. Throughout his tenure, President Karimov paid four official visits to Türkiye (1991, 1994, 1995, and 1998). The first major diplomatic crisis emerged in 1993, when Türkiye offered asylum to the Uzbek opposition leader Muhammad Salih and his supporters, leading to heightened tensions between the two countries. In response, President Karimov recalled Uzbek students studying in Türkiye. This issue subsequently became one of the principal sources of tension in Türkiye–Uzbekistan relations (Hamzaoğlu, 2022: 319). Uzbekistan possesses more than 100 varieties of mineral resources. Among these, gold, copper, silver, lead, zinc, and uranium constitute the country's most significant mineral assets. In addition, Uzbekistan is endowed with substantial reserves of tungsten, natural gas, and other underground mineral resources. The country ranks fourth worldwide in gold reserves, while in terms of gold production it ranks second among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) after Russia and ninth globally. Copper is another strategically important natural resource; with estimated copper reserves of 1.3 million tons, Uzbekistan ranks tenth in the world. Furthermore, the country is the fourth-largest producer and the fifth-largest exporter of uranium globally (Yücememiş et al., 2017: 175). Despite periodic political tensions, Türkiye and Uzbekistan have remained committed to expanding their trade and economic cooperation. Bilateral trade volume increased from USD 75 million in 1992 to USD 1.5 billion by 2015. Although the Karimov administration adopted a conservative stance in the political sphere, it consistently pursued a strategy of diversifying Uzbekistan's external economic relations. Accordingly, the government actively encouraged foreign investment in the Uzbek economy (Hamzaoğlu, 2022: 320).

3. Strategic Sectors of Cooperation

Relations between Türkiye and Uzbekistan are founded on strong fraternal ties rooted in a shared history, culture, and common spiritual values, and have gradually evolved into a multidimensional strategic partnership. Bilateral cooperation has gained a solid legal foundation through the signing of numerous agreements and protocols. In 2017, bilateral relations were elevated to the level of a Strategic Partnership. Subsequently, the establishment of the Türkiye–Uzbekistan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HLSCC) in 2018 provided the highest level of institutionalization for bilateral relations. Following the Third HLSCC Meeting, held in Ankara on 6 June 2024, the relationship was upgraded to the level of a Deepened Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with the objective of expanding cooperation across a wide range of sectors, particularly energy, transportation, the defense industry, agriculture, tourism, and digitalization. In addition, institutional mechanisms such as the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) and the Joint Strategic Planning Group (JSPG) have further strengthened the institutional framework of bilateral relations. Türkiye and Uzbekistan also cooperate closely within international organizations and multilateral platforms, including the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), thereby contributing to

the promotion of regional peace, stability, and economic cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, 2026).

3.1. Industry

A substantial share of Türkiye's exports to Uzbekistan consists of manufactured industrial products, including machinery and equipment, automotive components, iron and steel products, and textile machinery. Conversely, Uzbekistan's exports to Türkiye are primarily composed of raw materials and semi-processed products, particularly cotton, textile products, natural gas, and mineral resources. This trade structure indicates that bilateral commerce is largely concentrated in the industrial and agricultural sectors. Another notable characteristic of trade between the two countries is the complementary nature of their economies. While Türkiye exports industrial goods and technology, Uzbekistan supplies raw materials and agricultural products, thereby meeting Türkiye's demand for these inputs. Consequently, bilateral trade has been able to expand in a balanced and mutually beneficial manner. This pattern of trade is underpinned by Türkiye's advanced industrial infrastructure and Uzbekistan's need to strengthen and modernize its industrial production capacity. A prospective Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries could further increase trade volume in this sector. In particular, the elimination or reduction of customs tariffs would facilitate greater access for Turkish industrial products to the Uzbek market, thereby supporting Uzbekistan's industrial modernization efforts (Furtana, 2024: 94–95). During the 2017–2025 period, bilateral trade between Türkiye and Uzbekistan approximately doubled, reaching USD 3 billion. Over the same period, Uzbekistan's exports to Türkiye increased to USD 1.1 billion, while imports from Türkiye reached USD 1.9 billion. As imports expanded at a faster pace than exports, Uzbekistan recorded a trade deficit of USD 751.6 million in its bilateral trade with Türkiye. As of 2025, Türkiye remained one of Uzbekistan's principal trading partners, accounting for 3.7% of the country's total foreign trade. In 2025, Uzbekistan's exports to Türkiye were led by industrial products, amounting to USD 511.4 million (45%), followed by manufactures of precious metals at USD 152.3 million (13.4%), chemical products at USD 124.3 million (11%), machinery and transport equipment at USD 80.1 million (7%), food products at USD 63 million (5.5%), petroleum products at USD 36.6 million (3.2%), non-food raw materials at USD 18 million (1.6%), and services exports totaling USD 149.9 million (13.2%). Imports from Türkiye consisted primarily of machinery and transport equipment valued at USD 674.6 million (35.7%), followed by chemical products at USD 408.9 million (21.7%), industrial goods at USD 390.2 million (20.7%), manufactured products at USD 136.2 million (7.2%), food products at USD 94.6 million (5%), petroleum products at USD 30.2 million (1.6%), non-food raw materials at USD 30.1 million (1.6%), and services amounting to USD 117.4 million (6.2%).

Overall, the continuous expansion of bilateral trade volume, together with the strategic agreements signed in recent years, demonstrates the progressive deepening of economic relations between Türkiye and Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the faster growth of imports from Türkiye has resulted in a widening bilateral trade deficit for Uzbekistan, making the achievement of a more balanced trade structure an important policy consideration for the future (Taşkent Ticaret Müşavirliği, 2026).

3.2. Energy

As part of its ongoing energy sector reforms, Uzbekistan has steadily deepened its cooperation with Türkiye. Türkiye's institutional expertise in the energy sector has served as an important reference, particularly during the establishment of Uzbekistan's energy market regulatory authority. Bilateral cooperation has been translated into concrete outcomes through public–private partnership (PPP) projects. Notably, the first international PPP tender for electricity distribution in the Samarkand region was awarded to a Turkish company. In addition, Turkish firms have assumed active roles in engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) activities related to energy infrastructure

projects. The first PPP initiatives for the district heating system in Tashkent, together with the establishment of a cogeneration facility, represent further milestones in bilateral energy cooperation. These developments demonstrate that the energy partnership between Türkiye and Uzbekistan continues to expand across multiple areas, particularly electricity generation, distribution, and infrastructure investment (Eurasia Studies Center, 2025).

3.3. Transport and Logistics

Over the past decade, the Government of Uzbekistan has made significant progress in developing international transport corridors. The country is implementing plans to strengthen its northern, northwestern, southern, southwestern, and eastern transport corridors. These initiatives are expected to facilitate Uzbekistan's access to the markets of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) member states, European countries, Iran, Türkiye, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and China (Çakaloz & Mingboeva, 2025: 51). According to the Statistics Agency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (2025), a total of 1.601 billion tons of freight were transported by all modes of transport during the January–December 2025 period, representing a 4.3% increase compared with the previous year. Of this total, 1.434 billion tons were transported by road, 107.9 million tons by rail, 58.4 million tons via pipelines, and 205.2 thousand tons by air. During the same period, total freight turnover reached 84.021 billion ton-kilometers, reflecting a 1.9% increase over the previous year. Road transport accounted for the largest share of freight transport at 89.6%, while the combined share of all other transport modes amounted to 10.4%. In terms of freight turnover, rail transport accounted for 28.384 billion ton-kilometers, representing 33.8% of total freight circulation. Compared with 2024, the share of pipeline transport declined by 2.5 percentage points, whereas the shares of road transport increased by 1.5 percentage points, and those of air and rail transport each increased by 0.5 percentage points (National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2026). Uzbekistan aims to become an international transit hub by modernizing its transportation and logistics infrastructure. To achieve this objective, increasing foreign investment, strengthening cooperation with international financial institutions, and implementing new transportation projects have been identified as strategic priorities. Under the Uzbekistan–2030 Strategy, the country plans to increase annual transit freight volume to 16 million tons while reducing rail freight transportation time by 40%. The strategy also aims to triple passenger and freight transportation services and increase the share of electrified railways to 65%. Beyond modernizing road and railway infrastructure, the strategy seeks to enhance Uzbekistan's capacity as a regional logistics hub by encouraging greater participation of the private sector and foreign investors in the transportation sector (Topildiev, 2024).

3.4. Tourism

Relations between Uzbekistan and Türkiye are founded on a shared historical legacy, common Turkic cultural heritage, the shared values of Islamic civilization, and centuries of interaction along the Silk Road. Throughout history, distinguished scholars, artists, and intellectuals have contributed to the development of strong cultural ties between the two societies, fostering a shared civilizational identity that continues to shape bilateral relations today. Following Uzbekistan's independence, Türkiye became one of the first countries to recognize the new state, laying the foundation for the rapid expansion of bilateral relations across political, economic, and social spheres. Over time, culture and tourism have emerged as some of the most dynamic areas of cooperation between the two countries. Shared linguistic and cultural characteristics, together with common religious and historical heritage, have facilitated the development of cultural, religious, educational, and heritage tourism. Within this framework, tourism has evolved beyond its economic significance to become an important instrument for strengthening mutual understanding and promoting cultural exchange between the two societies. In recent years, Uzbekistan has attracted considerable attention through comprehensive reforms aimed at modernizing its tourism sector. These reforms have prioritized the

simplification of visa procedures, improvements in tourism infrastructure, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the digitalization of tourism services. Historic cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shahrisabz have increasingly attracted visitors from Türkiye as well as other countries, consolidating their status as major centers of cultural tourism. These initiatives have also strengthened Uzbekistan's ability to use tourism as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and international engagement. Türkiye, with its rich and diversified tourism offerings, advanced infrastructure, and strong global brand recognition, ranks among the world's leading tourist destinations. In particular, cultural and historical tourism continues to constitute one of the fundamental pillars of the country's tourism strategy (Baxtiyarovna, 2026: 15).

3.5. Agriculture

Agricultural cooperation between Türkiye and Uzbekistan is primarily based on the Protocol on Agricultural Cooperation, signed in 1997. This agreement aims to promote comprehensive collaboration in key agricultural sectors, including cotton production, sugar beet cultivation, livestock farming, and irrigation technologies. Over time, this bilateral cooperation has evolved into a broader multilateral framework under the auspices of the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), thereby acquiring a more comprehensive dimension. Established to strengthen cultural, political, and economic relations among Turkic-speaking countries, the OTS has become a strategic platform for coordinating agricultural policies, particularly since 2022 (Khalimova & Yuldosheva, 2025: 689). Uzbekistan occupies a prominent position in agricultural exports. Cotton, together with other agricultural commodities, constitutes a significant component of the country's trade with Türkiye. The implementation of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) could substantially enhance Uzbekistan's agricultural exports, while simultaneously facilitating access to more cost-effective raw materials for Türkiye's textile industry. Furthermore, expanding Türkiye's exports of agricultural technologies and equipment to Uzbekistan could further strengthen bilateral cooperation in this sector (Furtana, 2024: 95).

4. Future Prospects and Policy Recommendations

Uzbekistan's political, economic, and social reforms are expected to exert a significant influence on the future development of Central Asia. By contributing to regional prosperity, stability, and security, these reforms also have the potential to facilitate the resolution of longstanding disputes among neighboring countries. Protracted conflicts involving Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and other ethnic communities have imposed considerable costs on the region. The new Uzbek administration has pursued negotiations aimed at resolving a wide range of issues, including border disputes, while simultaneously seeking to strengthen regional economic integration. Accordingly, the reform agenda implemented in both domestic and foreign policy is expected to make a substantial contribution to regional development. Likewise, Türkiye, which seeks to further strengthen its relations with Central Asian countries, should continue to expand its cooperation with Uzbekistan (İstikbal, 2021: 14). The death of President Islam Karimov in 2016 marked the beginning of a significant transformation in Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policy. Subsequently, the official visit of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to Uzbekistan on 17–18 November 2016 was widely regarded as the beginning of a new era in bilateral relations. These high-level contacts laid the foundation for revitalizing Türkiye–Uzbekistan relations, which had remained relatively limited for an extended period, and for strengthening mutual cooperation. Following the presidential election held on 4 December 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoyev assumed office, accelerating the country's comprehensive reform process. Within this framework, the Action Strategy on Five Priority Areas of Development for 2017–2021 was adopted, aiming to implement substantial political, economic, and social reforms. Guided by this reform agenda, Uzbekistan gradually moved away from its long-standing inward-looking governance model, seeking instead to establish stronger relations with the international community and pursue a more open and cooperative foreign policy (Tavukcu, 2026).

The cooperation potential between Türkiye and Uzbekistan extends across numerous strategic sectors, including the economy, industry, energy, finance, agriculture, transportation, education, healthcare, tourism, and the defense industry. In particular, the modernization of industrial and energy sectors, the strengthening of financial systems, and the development of transportation infrastructure have emerged as priority areas capable of deepening economic integration between the two countries. Furthermore, modernizing agricultural production, promoting joint investment projects, and reducing barriers to trade would support the sustainable expansion of bilateral economic relations. Strengthening educational and academic cooperation through expanded student and expert exchange programs, together with greater institutional knowledge sharing, would make a significant contribution to the development of human capital. In addition, joint initiatives in healthcare, telecommunications, tourism, and the defense industry would reinforce the strategic nature of bilateral relations and provide a solid foundation for long-term partnerships. Within this context, Türkiye's experience in reform implementation, institutional development, and economic development is expected to make a significant contribution to Uzbekistan's ongoing transformation process (İstikbal, 2021: 14–15).

Conclusion

Uzbekistan is one of the leading countries in Central Asia's ongoing economic transformation and possesses substantial development potential owing to its abundant natural resources, fertile agricultural land, young population, and strategic geographic location. Following its independence in 1991, the country pursued a relatively controlled and inward-oriented economic model for many years. However, particularly after 2016, Uzbekistan accelerated its process of economic liberalization through a comprehensive reform agenda aimed at improving the investment climate and strengthening its integration into the global economy. These reforms have not only contributed significantly to the country's economic development but have also fostered stronger political and economic relations with many regional partners, particularly Türkiye. This study sought to examine the current state of economic cooperation between Türkiye and Uzbekistan while identifying promising sectors for expanding bilateral collaboration in the future. The findings indicate that bilateral economic relations have gained considerable momentum, especially since 2017, with the strategic partnership between the two countries increasingly reflected in the economic sphere. The analysis demonstrates that bilateral trade has grown steadily and that economic cooperation has expanded beyond merchandise trade to include investment, technology transfer, and joint production initiatives. Türkiye's industrial expertise, combined with Uzbekistan's abundant natural resources, young labor force, and reform-oriented economic structure, provides a strong foundation for mutually beneficial economic cooperation. An examination of the strategic sectors considered in this study suggests that industry, energy, transportation, and logistics offer the greatest potential for the future expansion of bilateral economic cooperation. In particular, the combination of Uzbekistan's industrialization objectives with Türkiye's technological capabilities and advanced manufacturing infrastructure creates favorable conditions for the establishment of joint industrial zones, technology transfer initiatives, and production partnerships capable of generating substantial economic benefits for both countries. The tourism and agricultural sectors also represent important opportunities for diversifying bilateral economic cooperation. The shared historical and cultural heritage of the two countries provides a strong basis for the further development of cultural and religious tourism, while cooperation in modern agricultural production techniques, irrigation technologies, and agro-industrial projects is expected to strengthen bilateral trade and investment in the agricultural sector. Nevertheless, the analysis suggests that the existing economic relationship has not yet fully realized its potential. Although the continued growth in bilateral trade is encouraging, achieving the long-term objectives established by both countries will require further simplification of customs procedures, reductions in transportation costs, greater harmonization of investment legislation, stronger financial cooperation mechanisms, and enhanced direct collaboration between private-sector enterprises. In addition, promoting joint research and

development (R&D) activities, expanding academic partnerships, and implementing collaborative programs for the development of highly skilled human capital would make significant contributions to the long-term sustainability of the bilateral economic partnership. In conclusion, economic cooperation between Türkiye and Uzbekistan represents a dynamic partnership that extends well beyond existing trade relations and offers substantial development potential across numerous strategic sectors. In particular, industry, energy, transportation and logistics, agriculture, tourism, digitalization, and the green transition emerge as the most promising areas for further deepening bilateral economic relations. Provided that the current political commitment is maintained, economic reforms continue, and coordination between the public and private sectors is further strengthened, the economic partnership between Türkiye and Uzbekistan is expected to reach a significantly higher level, generating substantial benefits not only for bilateral relations but also for the broader economic development of Central Asia.

References

1. Baxtiyarovna, S. Z. (2026). Tourism As An Instrument Of Cultural Diplomacy In The System Of Humanitarian Cooperation Between Uzbekistan And Turkey. *Frontline Social Sciences and History Journal* , 6 (2), 14-18.
2. Çakaloz, B. Ç., & Mingboeva, K. (2025). The Importance Of Transportation Corridors From A Logistics Perspective: The Case Of Uzbekistan. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Denizcilik Fakültesi Dergisi* , 17 (1), 48-76.
3. Eurasia Studies Center. (2025). *Özbekistan enerji reformlarında Türkiye ile stratejik işbirliğini güçlendiriyor*. 06 28, 2026 tarihinde <https://www.avimbulten.org/public/tr/Bulten/Ozbekistan-Enerji-Reformlarında-Türkiye-Ile-Stratejik-İsbirligini-Guclendiriyor> adresinden alındı
4. Furtana, T. E. (2024). Özbekistan Ve Türkiye Arasında Serbest Ticaret Anlaşması Potansiyelinin İncelenmesi: Stratejik Fırsatlar Ve Ekonomik Etkiler. *17. International Conference On Knowledge, Economy & Management Proceedings*, (s. 90-101).
5. Hamzaoglu, H. (2022). Turkey-Uzbekistan Relations: Strategic Cooperation And Partnership. *International Journal of Social Sciences* , 6 (2), 313-329.
6. İstikbal, D. (2021). *Orta Asya'da Yeni İş Birliği Alanları Türkiye-Özbekistan İlişkileri*. İstanbul: Seta Yayınları. <https://media.setav.org/tr/dosya/2021/11/analiz-orta-asyada-yeni-is-birligi-alanlari-turkiye-ozbekistan-iliskileri.pdf>.
7. Khalimova, G. H., & Yuldosheva, M. B. (2025). Prospects For Cooperation Between Turkey And Uzbekistan In The Agricultural Sector And Water-Land Resources. *Oriental Renaissance: Innovative, educational, natural and social sciences* , 5 (4), 688-693.
8. National Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2026). *Vuu. Transport And Communications In The Republic Of Uzbekistan for January–December 2025*.
9. Sezer, S. (2025). International Trade Relations Between Türkiye And The Turkic Republics. *Black Sea Studies* , 22 (87), 1292-1310.
10. T.C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı . (2026). *Türkiye - Özbekistan Siyasi İlişkileri*. 06 28, 2026 tarihinde <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-ozbekistan-cumhuriyeti-siyasi-iliskileri.tr.mfa> adresinden alındı
11. T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı. (2026). *Özbekistan Ülke Profili*. . T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı Uluslararası Anlaşmalar ve Avrupa Birliği Genel Müdürlüğü.
12. Taşkent Ticaret Müşavirliği. (2026). Özbekistan ve Türkiye'nin Karşılıklı Ticaret Hacmi 2025 Yılında 3 Milyar Dolara Ulaştı, Yatırımlar Artmaya Devam Ediyor. 06 28, 2026 tarihinde <https://dtybs.ticaret.gov.tr/blog/post/32231/> adresinden alındı
13. Tavukcu, S. (2026). Yükselen Özbekistan-Türkiye İlişkileri. 06 29, 2026 tarihinde Institute Of Strategic Thinking: <https://www.sde.org.tr/sinan-tavukcu/genel/yukselen-ozbekistan-turkiye-iliskileri-kose-yazisi-62725> adresinden alındı

14. Topildiev, S. (2024). Transport projects: participation of Uzbekistan in the development chain. 06 29, 2026 tarihinde https://uzconsulate.ru/read_uz/756?ysclid=lvxrh60og6438209402 adresinden alındı
15. Yücememiş, B. T., Arıcan, E., & Alkan, U. (2017). Economic Relations Between Turkey-Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan And The Banking System. *Journal of Financial Research and Studies* , 9 (17), 161-203.